

## CLAIMS:

1. A method of managing booting of a plurality of target devices in communication with a network, comprising:
- 5 receiving, at a server in communication with the network, a request from at least one target device in a pre-boot stage;
- assigning a current boot category to the target device, the current boot category based on the pre-boot stage of the target device;
- generating a current boot list of target devices with corresponding
- 10 current boot categories; and
- managing booting of the target devices using the current boot list.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
- associating at least one command with the target device, the
- 15 command based on the current boot category.
3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
- executing the command at the target device.
- 20 4. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
- generating a command list comprising the command for the target device; and
- selecting the command to be executed at the target device from the command list.
- 25 5. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
- updating the current boot category of the target device based on the command.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

comparing the current boot category of the target device to a predetermined expected boot category of the target device to determine a boot difference between the expected boot category and the current boot category; and

generating a boot difference list comprising target devices with corresponding differences.

10            7.     The method of claim 6 further comprising:

associating at least one boot difference command with the target device, the boot difference command based on the difference.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

15           executing the boot difference command at the target device.

9. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

generating a boot difference command list comprising the boot difference command for the target device; and

20            selecting the boot difference command to be executed at the target  
device from the boot difference command list.

10. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

updating the current boot category of the target device based on  
25 the boot difference command.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

storing the current boot list.

12. The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
storing the boot difference list.

- 5            13.     Computer program product in a computer usable medium for  
managed booting of a plurality of target devices in communication with a  
network, comprising:

means for receiving, at a server in communication with the network,  
a request from at least one target device in a pre-boot stage;

- 10 means for assigning a current boot category to the target device,  
the current boot category based on the pre-boot stage of the target device;  
means for generating a current boot list of target devices with  
corresponding current boot categories; and  
means for managing booting of the target devices using the current  
15 boot list.

14. The program of claim 13, further comprising:

means for associating at least one command with the target device, the command based on the current boot category.

15. The program of claim 14, further comprising:

means for executing the command at the target device.

16. The program of claim 14, further comprising:

means for generating a command list comprising the command for the target device; and

means for selecting the command to be executed at the target device from the command list.

17. The program of claim 14, further comprising:  
means for updating the current boot category of the target device  
based on the command.

5

18. The program of claim 13, further comprising:  
means for comparing the current boot category of the target device  
to a predetermined expected boot category of the target device to determine a  
boot difference between the expected boot category and the current boot  
category; and

10

means for generating a boot difference list comprising target  
devices with corresponding differences.

19. The program of claim 18, further comprising:  
means for associating at least one boot difference command with  
the target device, the boot difference command based on the difference.

15

20. The program of claim 19, further comprising:  
means for executing the boot difference command at the target  
device.

20

21. The program of claim 19, further comprising:  
means for generating a boot difference command list comprising  
the boot difference command for the target device; and  
means for selecting the boot difference command to be executed  
at the target device from the boot difference command list.

25

T06393" 0.256850

22. The program of claim 19, further comprising:  
means for updating the current boot category of the target device  
based on the boot difference command.

5

23. The program of claim 13, further comprising:  
means for storing the current boot list.

24. The program of claim 18, further comprising:  
means for storing the boot difference list.

10

25. A system for managed booting of a plurality of target devices in  
communication with a network, comprising:  
means for receiving, at a server in communication with the network,  
a request from at least one target device in a pre-boot stage;  
means for assigning a current boot category to the target device,  
the current boot category based on the pre-boot stage of the target device;  
means for generating a current boot list of target devices with  
corresponding current boot categories; and  
means for managing booting of the target devices using the current  
boot list.

15

20

26. The system of claim 25, further comprising:  
means for associating at least one command with the target device,  
the command based on the current boot category.

25

27. The system of claim 26, further comprising:  
means for executing the command at the target device.

the target device; and

5

29. The system of claim 26, further comprising:

10

30. The system of claim 25, further comprising:

15

means for generating a boot difference list comprising target devices with corresponding differences.

20

means for associating at least one boot difference command with the target device, the boot difference command based on the difference.

32. The system of claim 31, further comprising:

25

33. The system of claim 31, further comprising:  
means for generating a boot difference command list comprising  
the boot difference command for the target device; and  
5 means for selecting the boot difference command to be executed  
at the target device from the boot difference command list.
34. The system of claim 31, further comprising:  
means for updating the current boot category of the target device  
10 based on the boot difference command.
35. The system of claim 35, further comprising:  
means for storing the current boot list.
36. The system of claim 30, further comprising:  
15 means for storing the boot difference list.